New Hampshire Volunteer Lake Assessment Program

2003 Interim Report for Eastman Pond Grantham

NHDES
Water Division
Watershed Management Bureau
29 Hazen Drive
Concord, NH 03301

NEW HAMPSHIRE DEPARTMENT OF Environmental Services

OBSERVATIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

After reviewing data collected from **EASTMAN POND, GRANTHAM,** the program coordinators have made the following observations and recommendations:

Thank you for your continued hard work sampling the lake/pond this season! Your monitoring group sampled **four** times this season and has done so for many years! As you know, with multiple sampling events each season, we will be able to more accurately detect changes in water quality. Keep up the good work!

FIGURE INTERPRETATION

- **Figure 1 and Table 1:** The graphs in Figure 1 (Appendix A) show the historical and current year chlorophyll-a concentration in the water column. Table 1 (Appendix B) lists the maximum, minimum, and mean concentration for each sampling season that the lake/pond has been monitored through the program.

  Chlorophyll-a, a pigment naturally found in plants, is an indicator of the algal abundance. Because algae are usually microscopic plants that contain chlorophyll-a, and are naturally found in lake ecosystems, the chlorophyll-a concentration measured in the water gives an estimation of the algal concentration or lake productivity. **The mean (average) summer chlorophyll-a concentration for New Hampshire's lakes and ponds is 7.02 ug/L.**

  The current year data (the top graph) show that the chlorophyll-a concentration ***increased slightly*** from June to July, ***remained stable*** from July to August, and then ***increased slightly*** from August to September. The concentration on each sampling event was ***less than*** the state mean.

  Overall, visual inspection of the historical data trend line (the bottom graph) shows ***a decreasing (meaning improving)*** in-lake chlorophyll-a trend since monitoring began in 1987. In the 2004 annual report, we will again conduct a statistical analysis of the historical data to objectively determine if there has been a significant change in the annual mean chlorophyll-a concentration since monitoring began.

While algae are naturally present in all lakes/ponds, an excessive or increasing amount of any type is not welcomed. In freshwater lakes/ponds, phosphorus is the nutrient that algae depend upon for growth. Algal concentrations may increase with an increase in nonpoint sources of phosphorus loading from the watershed, or in-lake sources of phosphorus loading (such as phosphorus releases from the sediments). Therefore, it is extremely important for volunteer monitors to continually educate residents about how activities within the watershed can affect phosphorus loading and lake/pond quality.

- **Figure 2 and Table 3:** The graphs in Figure 2 (Appendix A) show historical and current year data for lake/pond transparency. Table 3 (Appendix B) lists the maximum, minimum and mean transparency data for each sampling season that the lake/pond has been monitored through the program.

  Volunteer monitors use the Secchi-disk, a 20 cm disk with alternating black and white quadrants, to measure water clarity (how far a person can see into the water). Transparency, a measure of water clarity, can be affected by the amount of algae and sediment from erosion, as well as the natural colors of the water. **The mean (average) summer transparency for New Hampshire's lakes and ponds is 3.7 meters.**

  The current year data (the top graph) show that the in-lake transparency ***decreased*** from June to July, and then ***remained relatively stable*** from July to September. The transparency in June was ***greater than*** the state mean, in July and September was ***slightly less than*** the state mean, and in August was ***approximately equal to*** the state mean.

  The historical data (the bottom graph) show that the 2003 mean transparency is ***slightly greater than*** the state mean.

  Overall, visual inspection of the historical data trend line (the bottom graph) shows a ***relatively stable*** trend for in-lake transparency, meaning that the mean annual transparency has not *continually increased* or *continually decreased* since monitoring began. Specifically, the mean annual transparency has ranged between approximately 2.5 and 4.0 meters since monitoring began in 1987.

As discussed previously, in the 2004 annual report, we will conduct a statistical analysis of the historical data to objectively determine if there has been a significant change in the annual mean transparency since monitoring began.

Typically, high intensity rainfall causes erosion of sediments into lakes/ponds and streams, thus decreasing clarity. Efforts should continually be made to stabilize stream banks, lake/pond shorelines, disturbed soils within the watershed, and especially dirt roads located immediately adjacent to the edge of tributaries and the lake/pond. Guides to Best Management Practices designed to reduce, and possibly even eliminate, nonpoint source pollutants, such as sediment loading, are available from DES upon request.

- **Figure 3 and Table 8:** The graphs in Figure 3 (Appendix A) show the amounts of phosphorus in the epilimnion (the upper layer) and the hypolimnion (the lower layer); the inset graphs show current year data. Table 8 (Appendix B) lists the annual maximum, minimum, and median concentration for each deep spot layer and each tributary since the lake/pond has joined the program.

  Phosphorus is the limiting nutrient for plant and algae growth in New Hampshire's freshwater lakes and ponds. Too much phosphorus in a lake/pond can lead to increases in plant and algal growth over time. **The median summer total phosphorus concentration in the epilimnion (upper layer) of New Hampshire's lakes and ponds is 11 ug/L. The median summer phosphorus concentration in the hypolimnion (lower layer) is 14 ug/L.**

  The current year data for the epilimnion (the top inset graph) show that the phosphorus concentration ***remained stable*** from June to July, ***increased slightly*** from July to August, and then ***decreased slightly*** from August to September.

  The epilimnetic phosphorus concentration on each sampling event was ***less than*** the state median

  The current year data for the hypolimnion (the bottom inset graph) show that the phosphorus concentration ***increased greatly*** from June to July, ***decreased*** from July to August, and ***decreased slightly*** from August to September. The phosphorus concentration in June was ***much less than*** the state median, in July was ***much greater than*** the state median, in August was ***slightly greater than*** the state median, and in September was ***approximately equal to*** the state median.

It is important to point out that the turbidity in the hypolimnetic sample was elevated on the July and August sampling events (9.2 and 5.76 NTUs, respectively). This suggests that the lake/pond bottom may have been disturbed by the anchor or by the Kemmerer Bottle while sampling. When the lake/pond bottom is disturbed, sediment, which typically contains attached phosphorus, is released into the water column. When collecting the hypolimnion sample, please check to make sure that there is no sediment in the Kemmerer Bottle before filling the sample bottles.

The historical data show that the 2003 mean hypolimnetic phosphorus concentration is ***slightly greater than*** the state median.

Overall, visual inspection of the historical data trend line for the epilimnion shows a ***decreasing (meaning improving)*** phosphorus trend since monitoring began in 1988. We hope this trend continues!

Overall, visual inspection of the historical data trend line for the hypolimnion shows a ***variable*** phosphorus trend. This means that the hypolimnetic phosphorus concentration has ***fluctuated,*** but has *not continually increased* or *continually decreased* since monitoring began in 1987.

One of the most important approaches to reducing phosphorus loading to a waterbody is to continually educate watershed residents about its sources and how excessive amounts can adversely impact the ecology and value of lakes and ponds. Phosphorus sources within a lake or pond's watershed typically include septic systems, animal waste, lawn fertilizer, road and construction erosion, and natural wetlands.

TABLE INTERPRETATION

- **Table 2: Phytoplankton**

  Table 2 (Appendix B) lists the current and historical phytoplankton species observed in the lake/pond.

  The dominant phytoplankton species observed in the July 14 sample were ***Rhizosolenia*** **(a diatom),** ***Dinobryon*** **(a golden-brown algae),** ***and Synedra*** **(a diatom).**

  The dominant phytoplankton species observed in the August 11 sample were ***Synura*** **(a golden-brown algae),** ***Dinobryon*** **(a golden-brown algae), and** ***Rhizosolenia*** **(a diatom).**

Phytoplankton populations undergo a natural succession during the growing season (Please refer to the "Biological Monitoring Parameters" section of this report for a more detailed explanation regarding seasonal plankton succession). Diatoms and golden-brown algae are typical in New Hampshire's less productive lakes and ponds.

- **Table 2: Cyanobacteria (Blue-green algae)**

A **small amount** of the cyanobacterium ***Anabaena*** was observed in the July plankton sample this season. ***This species, if present in large amounts, can be toxic to livestock, wildlife, pets, and humans.***

Cyanobacteria can reach nuisance levels when excessive nutrients and favorable environmental conditions occur. During September of 2003, a few lakes and ponds in the southern portion of the state experienced cyanobacteria blooms. This was likely due to nutrient loading to these waterbodies. As mentioned previously, many weeks during the Spring and Summer of 2003 were rainy, which likely resulted in a large amount of nutrient loading to surface waters.

The presence of cyanobacteria serves as a reminder of the lake's/pond's delicate balance. Watershed residents should continue to act proactively to reduce nutrient loading into the lake/pond by eliminating fertilizer use on lawns, keeping the lake/pond shoreline natural, re-vegetating cleared areas within the watershed, and properly maintaining septic systems and roads.

In addition, residents should also observe the lake/pond in September and October during the time of fall turnover (lake mixing) to document any algal blooms that may occur. Cyanobacteria (blue-green algae) have the ability to regulate their depth in the water column by producing or releasing gas from vesicles. However, occasionally lake mixing can affect their buoyancy and cause them to rise to the surface and bloom. Wind and currents tend to "pile" cyanobacteria into scums that accumulate in one section of the lake/pond. If a fall bloom occurs, please contact the VLAP Coordinator.

- **Table 4: pH**

Table 4 (Appendix B) presents the in-lake and tributary current year and historical pH data.

pH is measured on a logarithmic scale of 0 (acidic) to 14 (basic). pH is important to the survival and reproduction of fish and other aquatic life. A pH below 5.5 severely limits the growth and reproduction of fish. A pH between 6.5 and 7.0 is ideal for fish. The mean pH value for the epilimnion (upper layer) in New Hampshire's lakes and ponds is **6.5**, which indicates that the surface waters in state are slightly acidic. For a more detailed explanation regarding pH, please refer to the "Chemical Monitoring Parameters" section of this report.

The mean pH at the deep spot this season ranged from **6.29** in the hypolimnion to **6.86** in the epilimnion, which means that the water is ***slightly acidic.*** As organic matter is decomposed near the lake bottom, acidic-by products are produced which may explain the lower pH (meaning higher acidity) in the hypolimnion.

Due to the presence of granite bedrock in the state and the deposition of acid rain, there is not much that can be done to effectively increase lake/pond pH.

- **Table 5: Acid Neutralizing Capacity**

  Table 5 (Appendix B) presents the current year and historical epilimnetic ANC for each year the lake/pond has been monitored through VLAP.

  Buffering capacity or ANC describes the ability of a solution to resist changes in pH by neutralizing the acidic input to the lake. The mean ANC value for New Hampshire's lakes and ponds is **6.7 mg/L**, which indicates that many lakes and ponds in the state are "highly sensitive" to acidic inputs. For a more detailed explanation, please refer to the "Chemical Monitoring Parameters" section of this report.

  The Acid Neutralizing Capacity (ANC) of the epilimnion (the upper layer) this season was 6.40 mg/L, which indicates that the lake/pond is ***highly sensitive*** to acidic inputs (such as acid precipitation).

- **Table 6: Conductivity**

  Table 6 (Appendix B) presents the current and historical conductivity values for tributaries and in-lake data. Conductivity is the numerical expression of the ability of water to carry an electric current. The mean conductivity value for New Hampshire's lakes and ponds is **62.1 uMhos/cm**. For a more detailed explanation, please refer to the "Chemical Monitoring Parameters" section of this report.

  The conductivity has ***increased*** in the lake/pond and most of the inlets since monitoring began. Specifically, the mean annual conductivity of the **epilimnion** this season was **218.5 uMhos/cm**, which is ***much greater than*** the state mean and is the ***highest annual mean*** that has been observed at this station since monitoring began.

Typically, sources of increased conductivity are due to human activity. These activities include septic systems that fail and leak leachate into the groundwater (and eventually into the tributaries and the lake/pond), agricultural runoff, and road runoff (which contains road salt during the spring snow melt). New development in the watershed can alter runoff patterns and expose new soil and bedrock areas, which could contribute to increasing conductivity. In addition, natural sources, such as iron deposits in bedrock, can influence conductivity.

It is possible that de-icing materials applied to nearby roadways during the winter months may be influencing the conductivity in the tributaries and in the lake. In New Hampshire, the most commonly used de-icing material is salt (sodium chloride). Therefore, we recommend that the epilimnion and the inlets with elevated conductivity be sampled for chloride next season.

Please note that there will be an additional cost for each chloride sample, and these samples can not be analyzed at the satellite laboratory at Colby Sawyer College. Therefore, it would be best to collect the chloride samples during the annual biologist visit next season.

In addition, we recommend that your monitoring group conduct stream surveys and storm event sampling along the inlet(s) with elevated conductivity (in particular **Mill Pond Brook** and **Stroing Brook)** so that we can determine what may be causing the increases.

For a detailed explanation on how to conduct rain event and stream surveys, please refer to the 2002 VLAP Annual Report "Special Topic Article", or contact the VLAP Coordinator.

- **Table 8: Total Phosphorus**

  Table 8 (Appendix B) presents the current year and historical total phosphorus data for in-lake and tributary stations. Phosphorus is the nutrient that limits the algae's ability to grow and reproduce. Please refer to the "Chemical Monitoring Parameters" section of this report for a more detailed explanation.

  Stroing Brook and Mill Pond Brook were the only tributaries sampled this season. The phosphorus concentration in these samples was ***relatively low*** this season (13 ug/L or less).

- **Table 9 and Table 10: Dissolved Oxygen and Temperature Data**
  Table 9 (Appendix B) shows the dissolved oxygen/temperature profile(s) for the 2003 sampling season. Table 10 (Appendix B) shows the historical and current year dissolved oxygen concentration in the hypolimnion (lower layer). The presence of dissolved oxygen is vital to fish and amphibians in the water column and also to bottom-dwelling organisms. Please refer to the "Chemical Monitoring Parameters" section of this report for a more detailed explanation.

  The dissolved oxygen concentration was ***low in the hypolimnion*** at the deep spot of the lake/pond. As stratified lakes/ponds age, and as the summer progresses, oxygen typically becomes ***depleted*** in the hypolimnion (the lower layer) by the process of decomposition. Specifically, the loss of oxygen in the hypolimnion results primarily from the process of biological breakdown of organic matter (i.e.; biological organisms use oxygen to break down organic matter), both in the water column and particularly at the bottom of the lake/pond where the water meets the sediment.

  During this season, and many past sampling seasons the lake/pond has had a lower dissolved oxygen concentration and a higher total phosphorus concentration in the hypolimnion (the lower layer) than in the epilimnion (the upper layer). These data suggest that the process of ***internal phosphorus loading*** is occurring in the lake/pond. When oxygen levels are depleted to less than 1 mg/L in the hypolimnion **(as it was this season and in many past seasons)**, the phosphorus that is normally bound up with metals in the sediment may be re-released into the water column.

  The ***low*** oxygen level in the hypolimnion is a sign of the lake's/pond's ***aging***. This year the DES biologist conducted the temperature/dissolved oxygen profile in ***August.*** We recommend that the annual biologist visit for the 2004 sampling season be scheduled during ***July*** so that we can determine if oxygen is depleted in the hypolimnion ***during the middle of*** the sampling season.

- **Table 11: Turbidity**
  Table 11 (Appendix B) lists the current year and historical data for in-lake and tributary turbidity. Turbidity in the water is caused by suspended matter, such as clay, silt, and algae. Water clarity is strongly influenced by turbidity. Please refer to the "Other Monitoring Parameters" section of this report for a more detailed explanation.

  As discussed previously, the turbidity of the hypolimnion (lower layer) sample was elevated on the July and August sampling events.

- **Table 12: Bacteria (*E.coli*)**
  Table 12 lists the current year data for bacteria *(E.coli*) testing. *E. coli* is a normal bacterium found in the large intestine of humans and other warm-blooded animals. *E.coli* is used as an indicator organism because it is easily cultured and its presence in the water, in defined amounts, indicates that sewage **MAY** be present. If sewage is present in the water, potentially harmful disease-causing organisms may also be present. Please consult the "Other Monitoring Parameters" section of the report for the current state standards for *E. coli* in surface waters. If residents are concerned about sources of bacteria such as failing septic systems, animal waste, or waterfowl waste, it is best to conduct *E. coli* testing when the water table is high, when beach use is heavy, or after rain events.

  The *E. coli* concentration at the **Mill Pond** and **Mill Pond Brook sampling locations** was **elevated** on the August 11 sampling event. Specifically, the concentration was 170 and 120 counts per 100 mL, respectively. While these concentrations were ***elevated***, they were ***not greater than*** the state standard of 406 counts per 100 mL for recreational waters that are not designated beaches.

  If you are concerned about *E. coli* levels at these stations, your monitoring group may want to conduct rain event sampling and bracket sampling in these areas. This additional sampling may help us determine the source of the bacteria.

  For a detailed explanation on how to conduct rain event and bracketing sampling, please refer to the 2002 VLAP Annual Report "Special Topic Article", or contact the VLAP Coordinator.

DATA QUALITY ASSURANCE AND CONTROL

Annual Assessment Audit:

During the annual visit to your lake/pond, the biologist conducted a "Sampling Procedures Assessment Audit" for your monitoring group. Specifically, the biologist observed the performance of your monitoring group while sampling and filled out an assessment audit sheet to document the ability of the volunteer monitors to follow the proper field sampling procedures (as outlined in the VLAP Monitor's Field Manual). This assessment is used to identify any aspects of sample collection in which volunteer monitors are not following the proper procedures, and also provides an opportunity for the biologist to retrain the volunteer monitors as necessary. This will ultimately ensure that the samples that the volunteer monitors collect are truly representative of actual lake and tributary conditions.

Overall, your monitoring group did an ***excellent*** job collecting samples on the annual biologist visit this season! Specifically, the members of your monitoring group followed the proper field sampling procedures and there was no need for the biologist to provide additional training. Keep up the good work!

Sample Receipt Checklist:

Each time your monitoring group dropped off samples at the laboratory this summer, the laboratory staff completed a sample receipt checklist to assess and document if the volunteer monitors followed proper sampling techniques when collecting the samples. The purpose of the sample receipt checklist is to minimize, and hopefully eliminate, future re-occurrences of improper sampling techniques.

Overall, the sample receipt checklist showed that your monitoring group did a ***very good*** job when collecting samples this season! Specifically, the members of your monitoring group followed the majority of the proper field sampling procedures when collecting and submitting samples to the laboratory. However, the laboratory did identify a few aspects of sample collection that the volunteer monitors could improve upon. They are as follows:

- **Sample Volume:** Please fill the *E.coli* bottles completely, leaving no room for air bubbles. This will ensure that the sample is not contaminated.

- **Complete Sample Sets:** Please collect a big white bottle (pH, conductivity, turbidity) **and** a small brown bottle (phosphorus) each time a tributary sample is taken.

- **Plankton Sampling:** Please write the sample depth on the bottle label from which the net was lowered to collect the plankton sample. This will allow us to calculate the abundance of plankton in the pond.

- **Tributary Sampling:** Sediment/debris was observed in the white sample bottle for **Stroing Brook** on the **September** sampling event. Please do not sample tributaries that are too shallow to collect a “clean” sample and do not sample the stream if the stream bottom has been disturbed. You may need to move upstream or downstream to collect a “clean” sample. If you disturb the stream bottom while sampling, please rinse out the bottle and move to an upstream location and sample in an undisturbed area.

USEFUL RESOURCES

Acid Deposition Impacting New Hampshire's Ecosystems, ARD-32, NHDES Fact Sheet, (603) 271-3505, or www.des.state.nh.us/factsheets/ard/ard-32.htm.

Best Management Practices to Control Nonpoint Source Pollution: A Guide for Citizens and Town Officials, *NHDES-WD 97-8*, NHDES Booklet, (603) 271-3503.

Camp Road Maintenance Manual: A Guide for Landowners. KennebecSoil and Water Conservation District, 1992, (207) 287-3901.

Comprehensive Shoreland Protection Act, RSA 483-B, WD-SP-5, NHDES Fact Sheet, (603) 271-3503 or www.des.state.nh.us/factsheets/sp/sp-5.htm.

Cyanobacteria in New Hampshire Waters Potential Dangers of Blue-Green Algae Blooms, NHDES Fact Sheet, (603) 271-3505, or www.des.state.nh.us/factsheets/wmb/wmb-10.htm.

Erosion Control for Construction in the Protected Shoreland Buffer Zone, WD-SP-1, NHDES Fact Sheet, (603) 271-3503 or www.des.state.nh.us/factsheets/sp/sp-1.htm

Impacts of Development Upon Stormwater Runoff, WD-WQE-7, NHDES Fact Sheet, (603) 271-3503, or www.des.state.nh.us/factsheets/wqe/wqe-7.htm

Lake Protection Tips: Some Do's and Don'ts for Maintaining Healthy Lakes, *WD-BB-9*, NHDES Fact Sheet, (603) 271-3503 or www.des.state.nh.us/factsheets/bb/bb-9.htm.

Management of Canada Geese in Suburban Areas: A Guide to the Basics, Draft Report, NJ Department of Environmental Protection Division of Watershed Management, March 2001, www.state.nj.us/dep/watershedmgt/DOCS/BMP_DOCS/Goosedraft.pdf.

Proper Lawn Care In the Protected Shoreland, The Comprehensive Shoreland Protection Act, WD-SP-2, NHDES Fact Sheet, (603) 271-3503 or www.des.state.nh.us/factsheets/sp/sp-2.htm.

Road Salt and Water Quality, WD-WMB-4, NHDES Fact Sheet, (603) 271-3503 or www.des.state.nh.us/factsheets/wmb/wmb-4.htm.

Sand Dumping - Beach Construction, *WD-BB-15*, NHDES Fact Sheet, (603) 271-3503 or www.des.state.nh.us/factsheets/bb/bb-15.htm.

Swimmers Itch, *WD-BB-2*, NHDES Fact Sheet, (603) 271-3503 or *www.des.state.nh.us/factsheets/bb/bb-2.htm.*

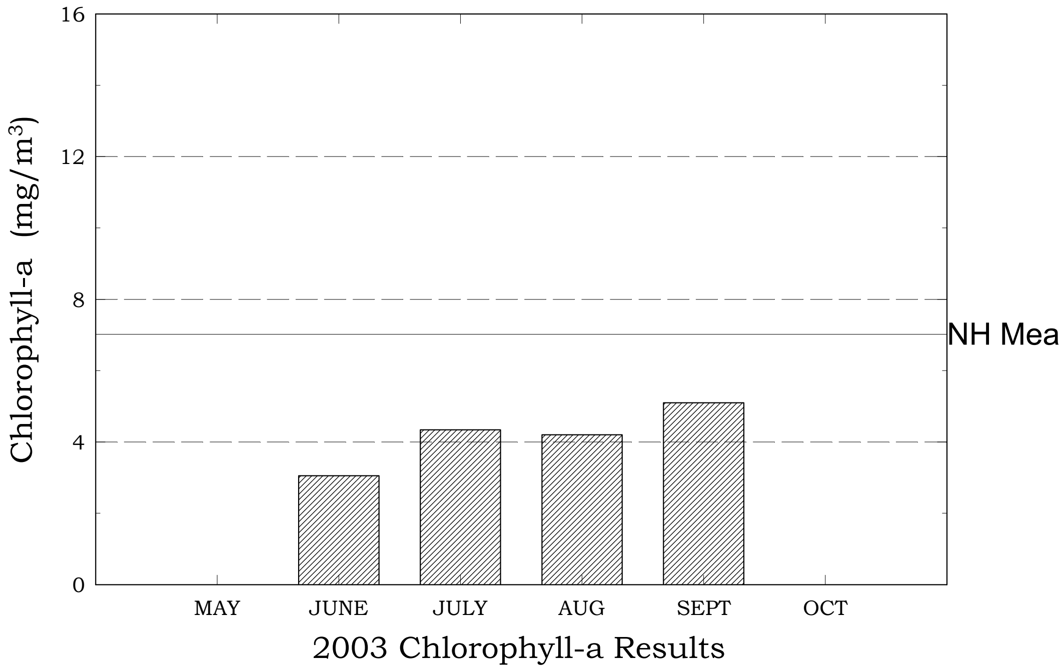
Through the Looking Glass: A Field Guide to Aquatic Plants. North American Lake Management Society, 1988, (608) 233-2836 or www.nalms.org.

APPENDIX A

GRAPHS

Eastman Pond, Grantham

Figure 1. Monthly and Historical Chlorophyll-a Results



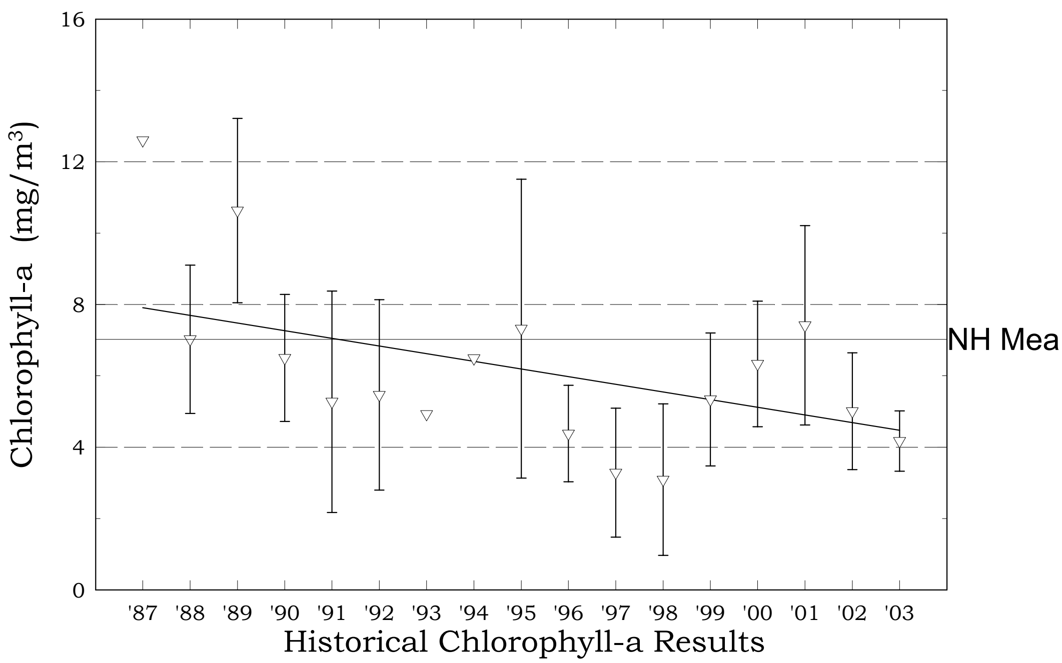


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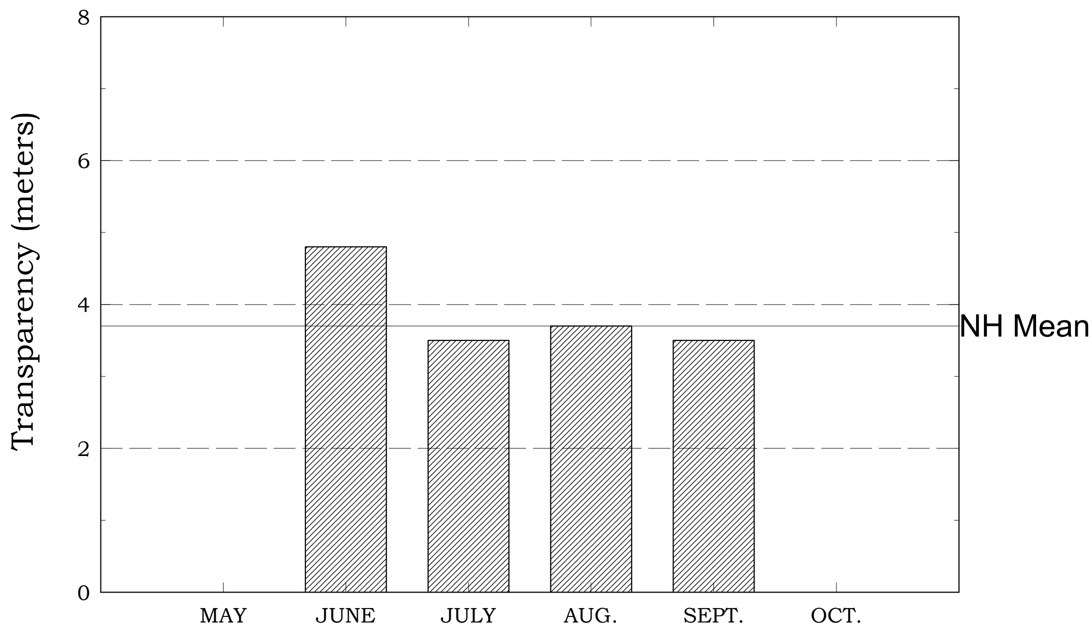
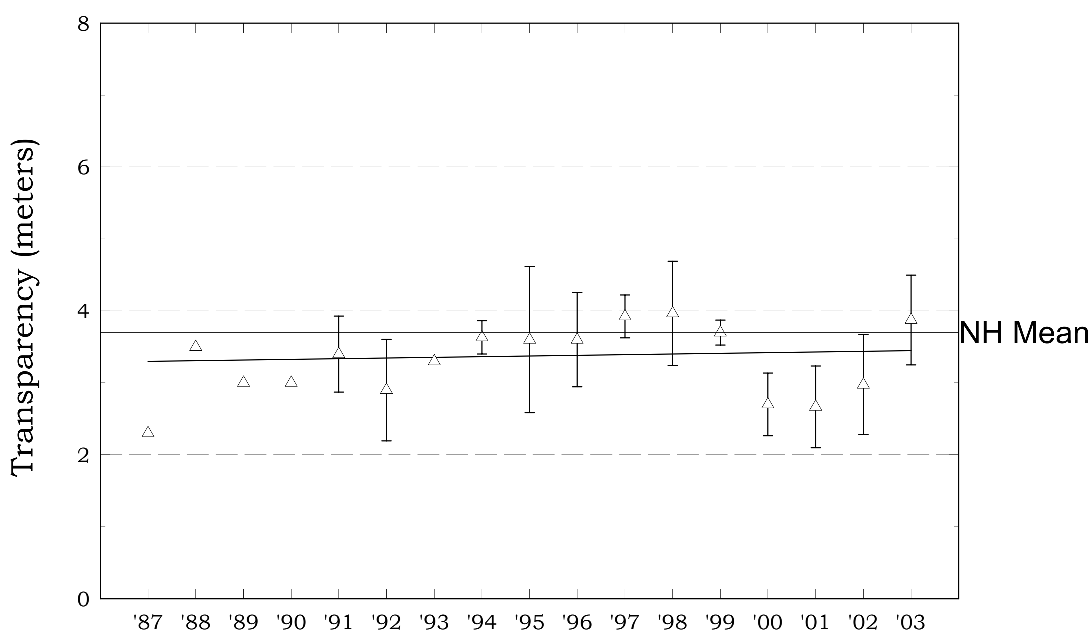
Figure 2. Monthly and Historical Transparency Results



2003 Transparency Results



Historical Transparency Results

Eastman Pond, Grantham

Figure 3. Monthly and Historical Total Phosphorus Data.